DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 249 307 UD 023 764

AUTHOR	Orum, Lori S.
TITLE	Hispanic Dropouts: Community Responses.
INSTITUTION	National Council of La Raza, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Jul 84
NOTE	27p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Access to Education; Demography; Dropouts; Elementary Secondary Education; Enrollment; *Hispanic Americans; *Population Distribution; Postsecondary Education; School Demography; *School Segregation; Student Attitudes; Student Characteristics

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the dropout rate of Hispanic students and provides an overview of dropout programs developed by Hispanic community-based organizations (CBOs). First, the paper documents the disproportionately high percentage of Hispanic dropouts, and considers the way in which school districts compile and report dropout statistics. Next, dropout causes and contributing factors are described. These include family background and responsibilities; parental expectations; school experiences; low socioeconomic status; lack of support from teachers and counselors and from student programs; and the fact that many Hispanic students attend schools with limited resources. Low student achievement and the resulting tendency to drop out are also linked to the widespread enrollment of Hispanics below grade level--a prevalent problem among the limited English proficient. Because of their limited financial resources, Hispanic CBOs are said to rely largely on existing services for presenting or helping dropouts. New programs are initiated, it is said, only when existing ones are inadequate and when funding can be obtained from shrinking government funds and other sources. The programs developed by Hispanic CBOs, however, are described as different from other public and private programs in both philosophy and operation: they are based on the assumption that youth and adults who have dropped out can and will succeed if given the right opprtunity and environment. (GC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

AUG 15 1984

ED249307

HISPANIC DROPOUTS: COMMUNITY RESPONSES

Prepared by

Lori S. Orum
Senior Education Policy Analyst

Office of Research, Advocacy and Legislation
National Council of La Raza
Twenty F Street, N.W., Second Floor
Washington, D.C. 20001
(202) 629-9600

Raul Yzaguirre, President

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
A. Escudero
Natl Council of La Raza
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

July, 1984

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

UD023764

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Several individuals contributed information in the preparation of this paper. Appreciation is expressed to the following NCLR staff who shared their experiences and knowledge: Emily McKay, Vice President for the Office of Research, Advocacy and Legislation; Arnoldo Resendez, Vice President for Technical Assistance and Constituency Support; Charles Kamasaki, Director of Policy Analysis; Martha Escutia, Legislative Director and Policy Analyst for Employment and Training; Valerie Mireles, Research Intern; and Alejandro Perilla, Policy Associate with the Education Component.

Additionally, our thanks to the following community-based organizations whose staff provided information on their programs and experiences in working with Hispanic dropouts: the Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans, Houston, Texas; Campesinos Unidos, Inc., Brawley, California; Casa del Sol, Boston, Massachusetts; Centro Cultural Chicano, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Chicano Federation of San Diego County, San Diego, California; Chicanos Por La Causa, Phoenix, Arizona; Colonias del Valle, Alamo, Texas; Concilio Mexicano de Chico, Chico, California; Denver Opportunity, Denver, Colorado; Escuela de la Raza Unida, Blythe, California; Guadalupe Center, Kansas City, Missouri; Gulf Coast Council of La Raza, Corpus Cristi, Texas; Hispanic Women's Council, Los Angeles, California; Home Education Livelihood Program, Albuquerque, New Mexico; Idaho Migrant Council, Boise, Idaho; Illinois Migrant Council, Chicago, Illinois; La Casa de la Raza, Santa Barbara, California; Latin American Research and Service Agency, Denver, Colorado; Latin American Union for Civil Rights, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Latino Caucus of New Detroit, Detroit, Michigan; Mexican American Unity Council, San Antonio, Texas; Michigan Economics for Human Development, Grand Ledge, Michigan; Minnesota Migrant Council, St. Cloud, Minnesota; New England Farm Workers' Council, Springfield, Massachusetts; Ohio Hispanic Institute of Opportunity, Bowling Green, Ohio; Organization for Business, Education and Community Advancement/Arriba Juntos Center, San Francisco, California; Reaching Adults and Youth by Success, Pico Rivera, California; San Hidalgo Institute. Colton, California; Spanish Speaking Unity Council, Oakland, California; United Migrant Opportunity Services, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Valle del Sol, Phoenix, Arizona; Weber Council of Spanish Speaking Organizations, Ogden, Utah; Western Service Systems, Denver, Colorado; and Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Pico Rivera, California.

I. INTRODUCTION

In many American communities, over half the Hispanic children enrolled in elementary school will leave high school without a diploma. In some urban areas, the dropout rate is so severe that only two out of ten Hispanic children entering kindergarten will become high school graduates. Dropout rates vary depending upon age group, language background, gender, region, and the way individual school districts collect and report information on youth who have left school. These factors, and others, contribute to Hispanic dropout estimates which range from 35% to over 86%. But by any standard, the proportion of Hispanic youth who drop out of high school is unacceptably high, and substantially exceeds the percentage of White and Black youth who leave school without diplomas.

Hispanic youth leave school for a variety of reasons which only recently have begun to be explored. They drop out of school, or are pushed out, often as young as 14 years old, to compete in a labor market which offers few opportunities for unskilled, marginally-literate teenagers. The unemployment rates for Hispanic youth ages 16-19, hovering around 20%, illustrate the stiff challenge which faces these young dropouts.

Hispanic community-based organizations, charging that official figures do not reflect the true magnitude of the dropout problem, have begun to collect and report their own Hispanic dropout figures in several communities. For example, groups have reported rates of 88% in New York, 74% in Chicago, and 75% in Houston -- substantially higher than the 10-45% rates reported by these school districts. The phenomenally high Hispanic dropout rates being reported in urban areas have produced public shock and bewilderment, but the resulting concern has also launched a flurry of activity. Major dropout

studies have been launched by several states, and state and local educational agencies are busily designing model dropout prevention programs aimed at Hispanic youth. Several large corporate and foundation grants have recently been made to develop programs aimed at reducing the Hispanic dropout rate. Hispanic community-based organizations, many of which have a long and effective record of providing educational services to dropouts. have much to contribute to these efforts.

Although efforts at dropout prevention are very important, little attention in the current discussion has been directed toward educational programs for those who have already left school. Although school districts sometimes offer educational programs for youth and adults who have left school without diplomas, there are few such programs for limited English-proficient, pregnant or parenting youth. migrant farmworker youth or other "hard to serve" groups. Programs which must charge tuition fees are often inaccessible to low-income dropouts, especially when such persons are supporting families. Additionally, the physical location of the program can present a barrier to participation. Programs located far from the local neighborhood require the expense of transportation and programs operating after-hours in public high schools may discourage attendance since some individuals are reluctant to attend programs held in the same high school buildings where they had frustrating and negative experiences as students.

For individuals who have "fallen through the cracks" in the public school system, the only safety net available in the Hispanic community has often been provided by Hispanic community-based organizations (CBOs). The programs these organizations design vary from community to community, depending upon resources and upon specific local needs. Most use education and training materials which have been designed to be "culturally relevant"; many also use bilingual teaching techniques to respond to the specific

language needs of the community. The programs differ deliberately from public school programs.

Hispanic CBOs provide an essential service in many communities, providing language training for those not fully proficient in English, teaching literacy skills, helping youth and adults acquire high school equivalency diplomas, providing counseling and training in job search and retention, offering specific training programs, and encouraging youth and adults to continue on to college. Some groups also work to prevent Hispanic youth from dropping out of school. Many have been remarkably successful in helping former dropouts become literate, productively employed adults, working in fields with room for advancement. Without such programs, many dropouts would continue to be uneducated, unemployed, or under-employed in dead-end, menial jobs.

The focus of this paper is on the responses of Hispanic community-based organizations to the needs of dropouts in their communities. It provides an overview of the characteristics of programs provided by these organizations which are designed specifically for Hispanic dropouts. Information was collected from interviews with 34 Hispanic community-based organizations which have a track record of providing effective educational services. All are concerned with the Hispanic dropout rates in their communities, and most operate programs for dropouts, or programs aimed at preventing Hispanics from dropping out of school. These organizations, affiliates of the National Council of La Raza, are located in 14 states and work with a variety of special subpopulations. They have a unique and invaluable understanding of the reasons why youth in their communities leave school, and have used that information to design programs to encourage Hispanics to stay in school, and to provide successful educational experiences to individuals who have dropped out of school.

Researchers studying the causes of the dropout rate and school districts designing programs aimed at preventing Hispanic youth from dropping out should

utilize the wealth of information and expertise which Hispanic community-based organizations have acquired on this issue. Additionally, the educational programs which these organizations operate for Hispanic dropouts are effective models for replication, and should be supported. not undercut, by federal education. employment and training programs.

II. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Throughout America's history some youth have dropped out of high school. In earlier times, when plentiful opportunities existed for unskilled labor, and a higher proportion of Americans were engaged in agricultural activities. a high school diploma was not a prerequisite for economic productivity. Large numbers of youth left school to take jobs in factories or on the railroads. migrate West and homestead, join the armed services, run away to sea, or work on a family farm. In immigrant communities. where non-English speaking children entered a monolingual sink-or-swim school system, most first-generation children left school without a diploma. Some of these individuals, because of the economic opportunities of the time and their own perseverance, did succeed. Some of our favorite national myths surround these Horatio Alger-type individuals — men who, with sixth grade educations. built financial empires. However, most immigrant, poor, and limited English-proficient youth didn't make it through school. They dropped out, marginally literate.

While jobs for the unskilled were plentiful, high dropout rates were not of particular concern. In 1900, nearly 94% of all those entering elementary school never finished high school. In fact, public education did not become compulsory until the 1930s, and then the motivation was largely to remove youth from a depressed job market where they were competing with adults for scarce jobs. As the U.S. economy shifted from rural agricultural to urban industrial,

and mechanization eliminated many unskilled industrial jobs, the high school diploma became an ever more important requirement for employability. Still, youth have continued to drop out of school. Although the dropout rate for the total population has declined steadily since the 1930s, the rates have not declined equally for all population groups.

Dropout rates are especially high for Hispanic Americans; a disproportionately high percentage of Hispanic youth leave high school without a diploma. Hispanic dropout rates nationally, and in most communities. are higher than the rates for either Black or White youth, ranging from 35% to 88%. The wide range of figures is due to differences in the definition of "dropout" and discrepancies in the age groups considered. Also, these data are often based on the self-reported rates of school districts, some of which continue to carry students on the rolls long after they have left school, or refuse to classify a student as a dropout unless the student has officially withdrawn from school. Since many students over a state's legal dropout age simply leave school without stopping to file the appropriate paperwork, many dropouts continue to be carried on school rolls resulting in reported rates which are lower than actual dropout rates.

According to a 1979 Census Bureau report. 35% of Hispanics ages 18-21 had dropped out of school, as compared with 25.5% of Blacks and only 15.5% of Whites. For Hispanics ages 22-34, dropout rates are even higher, over 45%. [1] The disparities between older Hispanics and Whites on the measure of dropouts are particularly great. For example. Hispanics born between 1951 and 1955 had only about the same chance of completing high school (58.6%) as Whites born between 1920 and 1924 (59.6%). [2]

For certain groups of Hispanics, such as women, non-metropolitan area residents. Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, and non-English speaking Hispanics, dropout rates are especially high. Since much of the available national data on Hispanic dropouts is based on an aggregated "Hispanic" category, dropout rates

for these subpopulations are likely to be substantially higher than figures based on aggregated data. For example, even using school data, which probably undercount dropouts:

- By age 17, 20.9% of Hispanic females have left high school without a diploma. Hispanic females are somewhat more likely to drop out of school than are Hispanic males, and are much more likely than other groups of women to be high school dropouts. In 1979, of Hispanic women 16-24, 34.2% were high school dropouts as compared to 31.5% of Hispanic males, 12.8% of White females and 20% of Black females. [3]

- Of non-metropolitan Hispanics aged 14-34, 44.8% have dropped out of high school as compared with only 15.2% of White non-metropolitan youth. [4]

- Approximately 50% of Mexican American and Puerto Rican youth never finish high school. [5]

- Data suggest that school attrition rates for Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans begins as soon as junior high school, and as early as ages 14 and 15. These rates accelerate at ages 16 and 17. In comparison, Black dropout rates are almost identical to those of Whites until age 17, when they increase sharply. [6]

- Language background is also related to high school completion. Hispanics with a non-English background, who usually or sometimes speak Spanish, are about three times as likely to drop out of school as Hispanics with an English-only background. Even those Hispanics with a non-English background who no longer speak Spanish are less likely than Hispanics with an English-only background to complete high school.

Hispanic parents and organizations in several cities, contending that the reported dropout rates do not correspond to the actual percentage of Hispanic youth who leave school, have begun to examine the ways in which school districts compile and report dropout statistics. Aspira of New York undertook one such study, charging that the New York City Board of Education's dropout projections of 40-43% for Hispanics dramatically underestimate the number of youth who drop out of school. According to Aspira's calculations, the dropout rate for Hispanics in New York is actually closer to 88%. Similarly, in Chicago, Aspira of Illinois conducted a study which reported an Hispanic dropout rate of 74% compared to the

district's reported rates of 10-45%. The Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans (AAMA) in Houston calculates an actual Hispanic dropout rates of 75% compared to the "official" rate of 10%. The dropout rates reported by the Hispanic organizations are not estimates, but are based on actual analyses of school district records.

The magnitude of the discrepancies in the offical and community-reported dropout rates in these areas suggest that similar discrepancies may occur in other communities as well. The actual Hispanic dropout rate, therefore, may well be significantly higher in many communities than the officially reported rates.

III. CAUSES AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Why do so many Hispanic youth drop out of high school? There is not one simple answer; the reasons vary from community to community, and from youth to youth. Yet there seems to be an underlying common network of factors which increase the likelihood that a youth will drop out of school. National data from the High School and Beyond Study are providing valuable information about the characteristics, background and attitudes of Hispanic youth who drop out of school, as compared with other groups of students. This study, which is documenting the experiences of a group of high school sophomores and seniors with bi-annual follow-up interviews. is one of the first national data bases with a significant representative sample of Hispanics. Data from the first follow-up have recently become available; analyses of that data should yield information on the post-dropout activities and experiences of youth in that sample.

In addition to national studies, which are invaluable for the common factors which they uncover. local case studies are also extremely important. Not only do needs and populations vary by community, but parents and youth

know, from personal experience, the reasons for the high dropout rate. Community-based organizations are also valuable sources of information, for they know the situation and their communities and the needs they must meet in their alternative educational programs. Staff of community-based organizations spend a great deal of time examining the reasons why youth and adults leave school, and why other programs have been ineffective in preventing this or in providing needed educational services to dropouts, in order to design programs which meet the specific needs of their communities. As operators of non-compulsory programs in which participants "vote with their feet," staff of these community-based organizations have had to learn a great deal about the causes of high dropout rates in order to design the kind of programs and supportive services which will lead to successful program completion.

Past research has shown that certain factors contribute to the general population's likelihood of dropping out of school. Family background and responsibilities, parental expectations, and school experiences all affect students throughout their school careers. School successes and failures beginning in elementary school influence the student's self-perception of his or her ability to complete school and contribute to feelings of either alienation or belonging. Generally, a decision to leave school is not made suddenly. As one study on the causes of dropping out concluded:

> For most, the decision is in the making and rooted in years of unrewarding and unhappy school experiences. The final act is the end of a process which we suggest has its beginning in the elementary school years, at least for many. [7]

Studies have suggested several common factors which identify potential Hispanic dropouts. Some of these are personal characteristics; some are characteristics of the schools they attend. Personal characteristics include high rates of absenteeism, lack of academic success, repeated suspensions, low

parent involvement, teenage pregnancy, and low self-esteem. School-related factors include lack of Hispanic role models among teachers and other school staff, lack of support from school counselors, work-study and cooperative education programs which underserve Hispanics, lack of appropriate programs for language needs, and the fact that many Hispanics attend school in districts with low per-pupil expenditures, high pupil/ teacher ratios, and limited resources.

Being overage for their grade, generally defined as being enrolled two or more years below grade level, has been shown to be an important determinant of student achievement. Children who are enrolled below grade-level are often significantly older than their classmates. They frequently experience discipline problems, boredom and low self-image, and run a high risk of eventually dropping out of school. Such enrollment below grade level may result from illness, frequent moves, or other factors which interrupt education. Frequently it is caused by a child "failing" a grade and being kept back to repeat the failed year. At each grade level a larger percentage of Hispanic children are enrolled below grade level than White children; this is especially true for Hispanic youth aged 14-20. Approximately 10% of Hispanic children aged 8-13, and about 25% of those aged 14-20, are enrolled below grade level. A study by the National Center for Education Statistics of Hispanic achievement in American high schools discovered that 12.1% of Hispanic high school sophomores were enrolled two years below the grade level appropriate for their age, as compared to only 4.1% of White sophomores. [8]

Likelihood of being enrolled below grade level increases if children were born outside the United States, speak a non-English language, or have parents with low educational attainment. Among Hispanics 8-13 years old living in homes where Spanish is sometimes or usually spoken, one-tenth were enrolled below the expected grade level for their age as of 1976. For 14-20 year olds, one-fourth were behind in school. Enrollment below grade level also varies by Hispanic

subgroup. Puerto Rican and Mexican American youth are more likely to be enrolled two or more years below grade level than are other Hispanics. [9]

Lack of academic success also places a youth at higher risk for dropping out of school. In addition to a higher likelihood of "failing" a grade and being retained, Hispanic youth are also more likely than White or Black youth to be placed in remedial classes. Data from 1980 show that 37.5% of Hispanic high school seniors were enrolled in remedial mathematics classes and 33.1% in remedial English classes, percentages significantly higher than rates of 29.3% and 30.8% reported for White students. [10]

Students who have been suspended also run a high risk of dropping out. Of Hispanic high school dropouts, studies have shown that 25% had previously been suspended, and another 20% singled out as classroom problems. [11] Students are suspended from school for a variety of reasons, from behavior problems to absenteeism. Recognizing that out-of-school suspension may only exacerbate the problems they are designed to correct, and that schools typically lose state average daily attendance (ADA) funds when youth are out of school, many schools have instituted in-school suspension programs. Such programs are generally popular with parents. It is often assumed that a school has eliminated its out-of-school suspension program if it has instituted an in-school program. However, usually school districts also continue to use out-of-school suspensions. In fact, data from Denver Public Schools shows that even with an an in-school suspension program. Hispanics are more likely than other students to be given out-of-school suspensions rather than referrals to the in-school program.

Students' aspirations. expectations, and self-concept also affect their likelihood of staying in school or dropping out. Many studies have shown that students who have low belief in their ability have the highest likelihood of dropping out of school. Although Hispanic youth have aspirations which are the same as other youth, their self-assessed ability to fulfill these aspirations

is below that of other population groups. While Hispanic high school seniors generally represent the survivors -- only 1% of Hispanic high school seniors anticipate dropping out prior to graduation -- responses from these seniors, collected by the 1980 High School and Beyond Study, still reflect these differences. The percentage of Black, White, and Hispanic students who had career aspirations requiring a college education was similar, though Hispanic aspirations are lowest; 34.4% of Hispanics, 38.9% of Blacks, and 39.3% of Whites aspired to professional or advanced professional occupations. Though a similar percentage of Hispanic, Black and White high school seniors planned to go to college. Hispanic students appeared to be more uncertain of their ability to complete college than either Whites or Blacks. Of the Hispanic seniors who planned to go on to college, only 36.9% felt that they definitely had the ability to finish their college education. Thus, even among those Hispanics who were finishing high school and planned to go on to college -- the survivors -- two-thirds were unsure of their ability to successfully complete school.

Language-minority students also run a higher risk of dropping out of school. This group includes persons of limited English proficiency and those who are from homes where the language commonly spoken is other than English. Approximately 70% of these limited English-proficient persons are Hispanic. Research has also shown that Hispanics with a Spanish-language background who themselves no longer speak Spanish are more likely to drop out of school than are Hispanics with an English-only background. [12]

There are currently some 3.6 million children whose proficiency in English is so limited that they are not immediately able to benefit from the type of instruction typically offered to monolingual English speakers. Of this number, only one-third are enrolled in programs which offer them appropriate language instruction. According to data from the 1978 Children's English and Services Study (CESS). 66% of limited English-proficient children received no special

language services; 10% received only English as a Second Language (ESL); and 23% were enrolled in bilingual education programs. However, only 6% received bilingual education services which provided at least five hours of instruction weekly in English and the native language, had professional staff, and assess the children's English and native language proficiency. 13 Lack of appropriate educational programs contributes to the high dropout rate of language-minority Hispanics.

Other significant factors contributing to the high Hispanic dropout rate include the low enrollment of Hispanics in work-study and cooperative education programs. Studies have shown that students who participate in work-study programs are half as likely as other students to drop out of school. 14 However, despite the fact that many Hispanic high school students work to contribute to the support of their families, few Hispanics participate in such programs. One reason is that participation often requires a specified grade point average, excluding many students who could benefit from these programs.

All the variables which affect low socio-economic status students affect children from the 29.9% of Hispanic families who live below the federal poverty level. Since most schools are still financed locally, often with property taxes, children living in property-poor communities usually attend low-wealth schools. In such schools the dropout rates are frequently higher than in other schools for all students. The achievement of minority pupils is influenced substantially by the type of schools they attend. As one study concluded,

> Schools differ...in the degree of impact they have on various racial and ethnic groups. The average White student's achievement is less affected by the strength or weakness of his school's facilities, curricula, and teachers than is the average minority pupil's... the achievement of minority pupils depends more on the

schools they attend than does the achievement of the majority pupils. [15]

IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS SERVING DROPOUTS

A. Overview

Community-based dropout programs differ from community to community depending upon specific local needs and agency resources. Thus, it is not possible to describe the "typical" community-based organization program for dropouts. Some programs serve primarily older dropouts, some work with youth; the approaches and services vary by age-group. Some work cooperatively with local public school systems; others operate autonomously. Some focus their efforts on preventing dropouts, others on providing services for those who have already left school, and some on a combination of both. Some are part of comprehensive social service programs; others are the only project of small, store-front organizations. Yet, in the experience of the National Council of La Raza, there are a set of characteristics common to these programs, and consistent ways in which they differ from public programs.

Community-based dropout programs are generally initiated in response to unmet community needs. Since most Hispanic community-based organizations have limited budgets, typically new programs are initiated only if existing public or private services are inadequate to meet the needs of the Hispanic community. Community-based organizations operating dropout programs generally feel that the public education systems have not effectively met the needs of Hispanics, either due to lack of sensitivity to Hispanics' needs, or because of inadequate resources. This is especially true for CBOs working with special subpopulations of Hispanic dropouts such as pregnant or parenting teenagers, delinquent youth, migrant farmworker youth, limited English speakers, or youth with substance abuse problems. Many times the CBO program for dropouts is the only program in the

community serving that group of individuals.

Where some sort of effective program exists in the public system or another community agency, CBOs generally design recruitment and referral programs -- identifying, counseling and enrolling Hispanic dropouts in existing programs. Where programs do not exist, or where they are not adequate to meet local needs, CBOS may step in to develop alternative programs. Even with high community demand for services, the difficulty of raising funds to support alternative programs is one of the greatest obstacles to establishing programs. According to Gloria Guardiola, Executive Director of the Houston-based Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans (AAMA). which has operated a successful alternative program for 14 years:

> It sounds great to say that there are young people who are not going to function in the school system and we need to provide them with alternative methods or alternative schooling, but then, the question is, how are you going to fund that alternative education program? Because the reality is that most of the young people who need alternative education programs come from a lower socio-economic status, and therefore, their families are not able to pay tuition. 16

B. Funding

The sources of funding for alternative programs for dropouts varies by organization. Some have developed contractual relationships with local school districts. Others receive a combination of county, city and/or state support. Some have developed cooperative agreements with local businesses and corporations which donate equipment, facilities or loaned personnel to the programs. Some receive, or initially did receive. federal grants or contracts under programs ranging from juvenile justice to mental health. Many organizations serving farmworkers receive funding from the U.S. Department of Labor's Farmworker Programs. A large number of programs were originated with funds from the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA). which was replaced in 1983 with the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). Federal, state or local funding is often

used as seed or matching money to gain additional funds from private sources, even among those with budgets largely based on government funds.

Although the Job Training Partnership Act is one of the largest federal programs designed to provide training opportunities to dropouts, the program's limited funding and performance-driven system, discourage long-term or comprehensive skills-development programs for dropouts. Some service delivery areas under JTPA have instituted performance-based contracting, which makes final payment to the training agency contingent upon placement and retention of the program participant in the job trained for. Thus, community-based organizations, with limited budgets. are forced to serve only those that are most "job-ready," thereby excluding those with limited skills who would require substantial educational remediation, such as dropouts. limited English-proficient persons. or illiterate individuals. Although CETA required that services be provided to significant segments of the community population, targeting language in JTPA is not mandatory, except that JTPA is supposed to serve 40% youth. Private Industry Councils (PICs). which determine which agencies receive grants under JTPA. are not required to include representatives from community-based organizations. Many PICs do not include any Hispanic CBO representation, nor individuals familiar with the abilities of such organizations.

The rate of CBO funding has declined by about 58% between 1980 and 1984 as the result of budget cuts and PIC composition. A 1984 study by the National Youth Employment Coalition found that during that period, roughly one in four CBOs lost all CETA/JTPA funding. Furthermore. about 43% of CBOs were unable to tap any new sources of revenue to make up for cutbacks they were experiencing. Nearly half of the CBOs reported that JTPA performance standards are forcing them to serve people with more skills and fewer barriers to employment than those they would prefer to serve. Finally, the Coalition found that between 1980 and 1984. 40% of CBOs served fewer out-of-school youth than before, and 23% of those served

50% fewer out-of school youth. Nearly half the CBOs also believe that their service delivery areas are placing a lower priority on serving disadvantaged and out-of-school youth than in the past. 17 Budget cutbacks and changes from CETA to JTPA caused many community-based organizations to close. NCLR identified at least 45 Hispanic community-based organizations which ceased operations between 1981 and 1984. Of those which remain, many have had to significantly curtail their services to youth while they search for alternative and diversified funding sources. As a result, there are fewer funded programs for youth and dropouts.

C. Program Characteristics

The programs operated by Hispanic community-based organizations differ consciously from public programs. Programs tend to be comprehensive, beginning with detailed intake interviews and continuing through counseling on job-seeking techniques and job placement assistance. Programs are typically accompanied by supportive services, and almost every program includes a counseling component.

Intake procedures are often detailed and include interviews, testing, and counseling. Since most CBOs attempt to provide personalized instruction, staff make a concerted effort to be fully aware of the backgrounds and special needs of the students. Typically, English-language skills and reading ability are assessed in order to determine placement and appropriate curriculum. In contrast to public school programs which have a predetermined curriculum, CBOs generally design the curriculum to fit the students.

Curriculum in community-based programs is most often described as having been modified to be "culturally relevant" and multicultural. Coursework for those who are limited in their English proficiency typically begins with an English as a Second Language (ESL) course. When participants achieve a certain level of English proficiency -- determined by successful completion of the ESL curriculum and/or testing -- coursework begins to prepare students for the

General Educational Development (GED) exam, or to prepare students for a high school diploma. Some smaller programs refer students to existing public adult education programs for GED preparation, monitoring their progress and providing supportive services and tutoring as necessary. Other CBOs provide their own coursework to prepare students for the exam and even administer the exam themselves.

Some programs -- especially those that serve youth who may have only "stopped out" of school for a time -- provide instruction which will allow students to re-enter the public school system and graduate with a diploma. These students may not have intended to drop out of school permanently, but due to factors such as pregnancy; lack of child care; referral to a drug, alcohol or delinquency program; seasonal moves due to farmwork; or a temporary family financial problem, are no longer attending public schools. For these youth, CBOs provide instruction which parallels that offered in public schools. Although some CBOs have developed accredited alternative schools and award their own high school diplomas, many working with young dropouts and "stopouts" strongly encourage their students to return to the public schools to graduate.

Comprehensive counseling is generally considered an essential part of CBO programs. Most CBOs believe that high school counselors have been unresponsive to the needs of Hispanic students. Research generally supports this perception. Not only are there few Hispanic counselors, but both counselors and Hispanic students report little interaction with each other. Counselors also indicate that their "counseling" is usually limited to referring students to appropriate career information materials. 18 Counseling at the CBO may be as simple as providing youth with access to adult or peer counselors from the community who serve as positive role models and talk with youth on a regular basis, or as extensive as full-scale clinical programs which involve the youth and his or her entire family.

The notion of providing Hispanic youth with positive role models is also an important component of community-based programs. Typically, CBO staff are members of the community, live in the neighborhood, and are familiar to many of the youth in the program. Organizations also recruit adults and youth who are regarded as positive role models to interact with dropouts. Such interaction may be in the form of a speakers bank for public and community programs, or direct participation in the dropout program. Indirect role models are also provided through curriculum which often includes information about the history and accomplishments of Hispanic Americans.

Supportive services are often a part of CBO programs for dropouts. Frequently the community-based organization is a multiservice agency which can provide dropouts with a variety of needed services to help them complete their educational program. Services range from child care for parents to transportation assistance. Some CBOs provide youth with appropriate clothing or tools for the jobs for which they are training; others provide medical care for pregnant teenagers and young mothers. Some CBOs provide alcohol and drug abuse programs, shelters for teenage runaways, housing assistance, medical care, and/or emergency food assistance. Some CBOs have combined day care centers with training programs for young mothers, and some program graduates are employed by the center. Where direct supplementary services are not available from the agency, personal referrals and assistance are generally provided.

Community-based programs are often innovative. Since funding is most likely to be available for innovative, demonstration projects, and youth are unlikely to attend a program which merely replicates the existing public school program, CBOs have strong incentives to try new and immaginative approaches to education. Several CBOs affiliated with the National Council of La Raza have developed education and training programs in the computer industry and other emerging high-technology fields. These organizations have

formed partnerships with local businesses and corporations, arranged for loaned instructors, facilities, equipment, or internship experiences, and are providing young people with an education and training experience which will prepare them for jobs in new and expanding fields.

CBO programs often include related social, athletic or cultural activities designed to provide positive experiences for youth and, in the words of many CBOs, "keep them off the streets." Some programs provide extracurricular activities such as instruction in music, dance, and art, or related special projects such as painting murals in the community. Others have recreational facilities and offer instruction in sports or simply a place for sports activities. A few urban groups provide summer camping programs. Many organizations see it as their responsibility to help provide these youth, many of whom are unemployed while they are studying, with as many positive activities as possible to reduce the likelihood of idle time which could lead to delinquent or other negative behavior.

Finally, all these programs concentrate on improving the self-concept of the dropouts with whom they work. Most programs report that dropouts have low self-esteem and feel incompetent. Creating an environment where success is possible and even probable is one of their primary goals. Typically, programs go beyond simple English as a second language or GED instruction to include training in job-search skills, interview techniques, and job retention skills. Youth are consciously prepared to succeed where they may have failed before.

Most programs report very high completion and placement rates, probably partly as a result of the participants' increased belief in their ability, and partly because of the CBOs' commitment to helping participants to succeed. Some funding is tied to placement and retention rates, and more important, youth do not willingly enter programs that are known to fail. The track record and performance rates of these organizations are well known not only to their funding

sources and community agencies, but also to the community residents. Inept programs do not often survive.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Hispanic community-based organizations operate programs for dropouts which are different from other public and private programs in both philosophy and operation. The differences are deliberate and are generally based on a careful examination of why youth and adults in the community have left school without a diploma. Programs vary by community and are responsive to the particular needs of program participants.

Programs operated by Hispanic CBOs are based on the assumption that youth and adults who have dropped out of school can and will succeed given the right opportunities and environment. Staff in these programs believe that program participants can and should complete high school and, in many cases, go on to college. CBOs that work with youth are particularly likely to design programs which lead to high school diplomas -- either through the operation of alternative accredited schools, or cooperative arrangements with local public schools. CBOs assume that there is no reason why Hispanics cannot complete school and be fully, productively employed adults in fields with room for advancement. They do not assume that being a dropout means being unintelligent or even unmotivated; they recognize that many bright, capable Hispanics leave the public schools without graduating. Their principal concern is to help all youth attain their full potential.

These positive expectations and belief in the abilities of program participants are an important ingredient of CBO-operated programs. Ample educational research documents the influence which teacher expectations have upon students. Since program participants generally have very low

self-esteem and limited belief in their own abilities, these positive expectations from CBO staff, coupled with programs which make success probable, are important components of effective programs.

Hispanic CBOs are also committed to programs which have a positive long-term effect on participants. While short-term training and quick job placement may be possible, it is not viewed as desirable if the individual is not adequately prepared to succeed in that job and adjust to fluctuations in the job market. In the experience of many Hispanic CBOs, such "quick fix" approaches to education and training provide only short-term solutions and there is high probability that the individual will either be unemployed again in a few years, or stuck in a marginal, dead-end job with no opportunity or skills for advancement. Hispanic organizations are dedicated to helping dropouts obtain education and employment skills and enter expanding fields, where there is a greater chance of stability and opportunity for upward mobility. Such an approach has a far greater chance of providing dropouts with long-term earning potential than does an immediate placement in a minimum-wage job. This long-range view conflicts with preferences of some funding sources for low-cost programs which must favor limited education and training and quick job placement -- a strategy which may be counterproductive for Hispanic dropouts.

Hispanic community-based organizations provide important and effective programs for dropouts. Agencies need to become familiar with these programs, and other public and private programs serving Hispanics have much to learn from Hispanic community-based organizations, as do researchers studying the cause of the high Hispanic dropout rate. Hispanic CBOs can provide some of the answers as to why Hispanics drop out of school and what can be done to help assure that they become productive, employed adults. Their programs are effective models for serving Hispanic and youth at risk of dropping out

and their replication could improve the effectiveness of many public and private efforts to reduce the Hispanic dropout rates and provide services to those who have already left school.

ENDNOTES

1 U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "School Enrollment -- Social and Economic Characteristics of Students," Current Population Survey, Series P-20, October, 1979.

2 U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, March 1980, Unpublished tabulations.

3 Op.cit., Current Population Survey, Series P-20.

4 Astin, Alexander W., Minorities in American Higher Education, Jossy-Bass, 1981.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Jay L. Kaplan and Edward C. Luck, "The Dropout Phenomenon as a Social Problem," The Educational Forum, Vol. XLII, No. 1., November 1977.

8 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "Achievement of Hispanic Students in American High Schools: Background Characteristics and Achievement."

9 Op.cit., The Condition of Education for Hispanic Americans, 1980.

10 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "High School and Beyond", 1980.

11 Op.cit., Kaplan.

12 Op.cit., The Condition of Education for Hispanic Americans, 1980.

13 Department of Health. Education and Welfare, National Institute of Education, "Children's English and Services Study", 1978.

14 Isidro Lucas, "Puerto Rican Dropouts in Chicago: Numbers and Motivations", paper presented at the Puerto Rican Social Work Curriculum Development Workshop. New York, May 1973.

15 Ibid.

16 Gloria Guardiola, "Alternatives in Education", paper presented at the Annual Conference of the National Council of La Raza, Chicago, Illinois, July 1983.

17 Lawrence Niel Ballis, "What's Happening to CBOs Under JTPA and Where Do We Go From Here? -- Highlights of the NYEC Survey", paper prepared for the National Youth Employment Coalition Symposium on Training Disadvantaged Youth and the Future Role of CBOs, June 5, 1984.

18 Lori Orum, "Career Information and Hispanic High School Students." National Council of La Raza, September 1982.